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PARADOXES OF MEDIA INFLUENCES ON
KNOWLEDGE CONSUMPTION AND USE

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Abstract

The final report of the Publications subtheme of the CEMP (Creation of European Management Practices) Project reviews the arguments and data presented so far in the project, and details some conclusions.

Two basic conclusions stand out. First, and contrary to much work done so far on the diffusion of business knowledge, the key variable for understanding the dynamics of business knowledge lies not in the producing institutions but in the consumers, the managers. Second, the reasons for which managers consume knowledge include, of course, its usefulness, but combined with its power to confer legitimacy and to act as a lever for the maximization of tactical freedom.

PARADOXES OF MEDIA INFLUENCES ON KNOWLEDGE CONSUMPTION AND USE

Introduction

In completing this final CEMP Report (No. 15) on the Publications theme of the CEMP Project, we pursue two aims: 1) to summarize the work done in examining the role of various media in producing and diffusing management knowledge, and 2) to formulate a theoretical framework for continuing the study of the dynamics of management knowledge. While previous reports focused on the publishing industry (No. 5), academic journals (No. 9), and personal media consumption (No. 10) using original empirical work, this final report represents a departure in two respects. First, we focus on the next step in knowledge dynamics: knowledge use. Second, our comments are informed by the wide-ranging work done by fellow scholars and captured in the December 2000 conference organized under the auspices of the CEMP and entitled “The Role of the Media in the Consumption of Management Ideas.” The conference papers bring to the question of the role of the media empirical studies in a range of settings, in different types of media (from the Internet to traditional printed newspapers), and across levels of analysis. Several aspects of the conference deserve special mention. The countries examined include Finland, Sweden, Denmark, the UK, Italy, New Zealand, and Israel. In addition, the papers operate on a variety of levels of analysis, including individual attitudes, inter-personal networks, organizations, and organizational fields. Given this plurality of papers, we have drafted this report with an eye to advancing the theoretical apparatus available for tackling questions about the links between institutionalized knowledge and action. We are trying to bring the agent ‘back in’ to scholarship addressing knowledge dynamics. The re-introduction of the agent takes two forms: first, in our understanding of institutional processes of legitimizing –where agents play a key role– and, second, in the specific focus on knowledge-action links. To add to the vocabulary of production and diffusion of management knowledge, we advocate the development of a vocabulary of knowledge consumption (Alvarez and Mazza, 2000). Inherent in consumption is the twin focus of media effects on knowledge dispersal and consumer effects on content. In this view, consumption is not simply consumption by passive commodity consumers, but is more akin to involved instrumental interaction by active clients. To delve into the breadth of knowledge consumption let us first consider the primordial act of consuming ideas and information: reading texts.

In his recent *What to Read and Why*, the noted literary critic Harold Bloom (2000) affirms that people read in order to: enlarge their sense of otherness, heal the pains of solitude, and that practice a sense of irony. Bloom’s comments serve to remind us that reading is active; and enlarging, healing, and practicing irony are skills that contribute to authentic community building. Still, in this conception there appears to be a gap between the private act of reading and socially located actions. One may rightly wonder how active reading leads readers to enact knowledge. In a similar vein, we wonder if reading on management topics helps managers translate management knowledge into action.

Available data clearly indicate that the rate of output of management related texts is increasing (Huczinski, 1993; CEMP Report 5). Management knowledge is made available to managers through books, the popular press, broadcast media, management gurus, the Internet, and formal education. Hence, knowledge consumption is taking on a broader scope in terms of depth of coverage and range of media. Given that the managerial task is performed by decision-makers who are lonely and uncertain agents, then knowledge consumption may indeed enlarge the sense of otherness and heal solitude. If we accept the decoupling –or what Brunsson (1989) would call hypocrisy– between scientifically validated technical frameworks and the daily practice of management, then knowledge consumption may also enlarge a salutary sense of irony. In sum, the question is: do managers read for reasons not essentially different from Bloom’s readers of fiction?

Bloom’s comments about readers lead us to ponder various questions. Managers read –or, in the case of other media, absorb– knowledge in a variety of forms: narratives, “recipes,” procedures, formal abstractions, and pithy metaphors, to name a few. Managers still seem to be eager to consume management knowledge, although existing studies (Gill and Whittle, 1992; Watson, 1994; Gopinath and Hoffman, 1995) show a growing skepticism towards management literature. Is it because managers need knowledge to inspire their actions regardless of their skepticism? It is well known that management literature and training are not purely techno-instrumental, but have important interpretive elements. This leads to a second question: are managers active consumers of knowledge? The two questions resonate with the central issue of this report: the link between knowledge and action.

In this report, we contend that managers are not merely passive receptacles of institutionalized knowledge. Rather, they consume knowledge in the course of playing their roles as agents in managing organizations. We believe that managerial action is the key to explaining why management knowledge is acquired. Departing from most available literature, which studies management knowledge from the perspective of the production–diffusion sequence, we argue that management knowledge emerges in relation to managerial action. Managerial action, like any other performative action, requires imagination. Imagination is the work of agents whose local actions resolve the incommensurable dualities of organizations, such as integration and differentiation, control and empowerment, or tacit and explicit knowledge (Eccles and Nohria 1992). Imagination for action is what “skeptically eager” managers seek when they read about management. Building on the above premises, we will develop propositions to unpack and interpret the connections among knowledge and action flows in specific organizational settings.

Our assumptions crystallize issues at the intersection of two valuable theoretical approaches: neo-institutionalism and action/praxis theory. From neo-institutional theory (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991) we take the ontology of institutions and the concern with the diffusion of knowledge and practice; we also utilize its robust hierarchy of levels of analysis: societal, organizational field, and organizations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). From action theory (Argyris and Schon, 1974; Brunsson, 1993; White, 1992) we take the view that action is local and that actors have meaningful agency even as they operate in socially constructed realities. Ironically, some of the original formulations of neo-institutionalism (Tolbert and Zucker, 1982; DiMaggio, 1986) addressed theories of practical action, though subsequent work lost this concern. Hence, our effort of synthesis can also be seen as bringing neo-institutionalist theory back to its roots.

This report is in three parts. We begin by introducing the concepts of knowledge and action, and review management scholarship on the relationship between the two. We examine the rational perspective on management knowledge both as a historical reality and as the

basis for the descriptive production-diffusion model. Critiques of this view of knowledge open up the theoretical space in which knowledge can be conceived as multi-dimensional and inherently bound up in action. We then examine the literature on managerial action with the aim of clarifying how managerial agency is grounded in and linked to knowledge. In the second part, having reviewed the literature, we present our own framework, which is designed to operationalize the link among management knowledge and action. This leads on to our propositions about action and knowledge in today's organizational settings. To anticipate, the propositions are: 1) management knowledge emerges in relation to practitioners; 2) prestige-instrumentality decoupling of knowledge is crucial for managers; 3) managerial action often entails localized coupling of knowledge and action for the sake of managers' network formation; 4) managing increasingly requires normative and cognitive practices as opposed to instrumental ones; and finally, 5) on-going organizational change requires more consumable knowledge in terms of volume and degree of differentiation. In the final section we explore the implications of our propositions for disentangling knowledge-action links.

The aim of this CEMP report is both to summarize "where we are coming from" and to indicate "where we are going." With a clearer empirical map of the sophisticated interplay between knowledge producers and media diffusers, and equally importantly, the blurred lines between production and consumption, scholars researching emerging management practice can begin to bridge the gap between knowledge and management action "on the ground." The Barcelona conference in December of 2000 [hereafter the Barcelona conference] met the need to look at the evolving world of media influences and the crucial knowledge-action links. The theoretical agenda this report advances is informed by the work presented at the conference. As we introduce our five propositions, we will review how particular papers presented at the Barcelona conference contribute to the formulation of these next-generation research questions. In concluding, we project the implications of these propositions into issues of politics and locality.

Knowledge and Action in the Management Field

Knowledge and action are classic "black boxes" in management theory. The tendency to unquestioningly accept these concepts and their inter-relatedness is made all the more impenetrable by the fact that knowledge and action can have different meanings, which sometimes are not made explicit. For instance, knowledge has several definitions, many of them stemming from the original cybernetic distinction between simple data, information and knowledge. Likewise, scholars have long debated the nature of agency (and the actions of agents). Agency has been analyzed within processes of local construction, editing, organizational change, and within chains of translations and actor-networks (Giddens 1984; White 1992; Emirbayer 1997). Logical premises of action have been constructed on (pure or bounded) rationality and political theory.

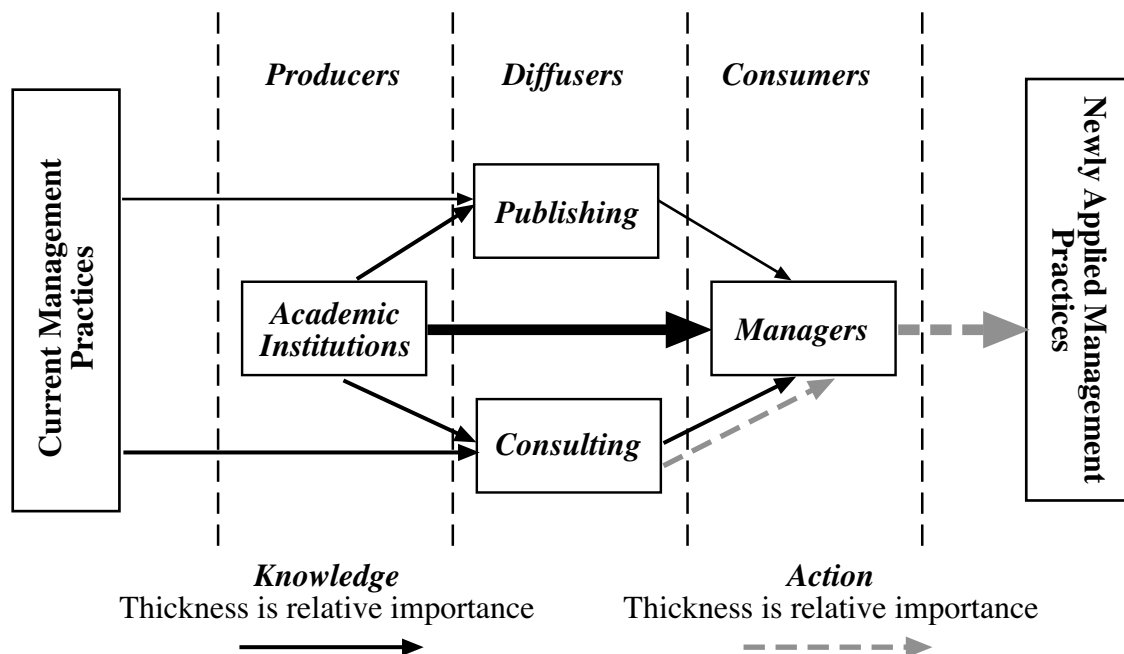
We would consider action and knowledge as concepts whose use in scholarly debate –like the concepts of legitimacy, structure, network, etc.– is often too vague. Using Hybels' (1995) arguments about legitimacy, we hold that action and knowledge are "malleable tools" which can be shaped according to the researchers' goals. As a consequence, action and knowledge are often assumed to be two sides of the same coin (and sometimes the same side!), even when they are used with incompatible meanings. However, this lack of stable interpretations is at the same time an opportunity for researchers as it calls for fresh ideas and exploratory studies. In the following sections, we propose to unfold the different meanings of knowledge and action in order to identify bridging areas.

Inside the Black Box I: Management Knowledge and its Dissemination

Management knowledge has spread widely in the last three decades, experiencing such a boom that many scholars have wondered about its characteristics as well as its creation and diffusion (Eccles and Nohria, 1992; Abrahamson, 1996; Alvarez, 1997). Several studies (Furner and Supple, 1989; Sackmann, 1992) have also built definitions of management knowledge and its properties and produced a taxonomy.

Despite these efforts, management knowledge is often viewed as a package of prescriptions produced, channeled and institutionalized by different organizational actors and institutions called producers. From this perspective, management knowledge (that is, management knowledge produced under the rules of scientific validation) is abstract and context-neutral. According to this rational model, depicted in Figure 1, management knowledge is produced by academia and disseminated by personal exchange (lectures, conversations, consulting projects), academic texts and management publications. Management knowledge dissemination thus looks like a distribution chain in which the students are interchangeable consumers (for a critique of the customerization of students, see Parker and Jary, 1995). This rational model may be interpreted in two ways. First, it is a theoretical model defining how management ideas are produced and diffused. Second, it offers clues to understand the historical process of rationalization and professionalization of management as a discipline. One danger is that the historical model becomes so reified it is unable to explain contemporary knowledge diffusion.

Figure 1. The rational model of management knowledge dissemination



The rational model (see Figure 1) envisions the universities and business schools as the main producers of a body of scientifically derived management knowledge and as the legitimate diffusers to the practitioner audience. What is defined and produced in the academic institutions shapes the set of acceptable practices and the management vocabulary available to the community of practitioners. The assumption that the knowledge flow is

predominantly from academia to practitioners has two consequences. First, universities, and other educational institutions such as business schools, have received undisputed attention from researchers as sources of knowledge production (Locke, 1996; Engwall and Zamagni, 1998). As soon as other actors, such as consulting firms, entered the field of knowledge production, the research community has seen them through the lens of the university-centered view. Second, management knowledge diffusers' concerns have been driven towards better channeling (through the effective use of new technology in teaching, increasing the marketability of management knowledge, etc.). Since the rational model assumes practitioners look to academia to learn about the latest developments in management theories and techniques (Beyer and Trice, 1982), "knowledge first, then action" remains the dominant lock-step sequence of informed practice.

A contrasting view maintains that knowledge goes beyond what is defined under the rules of scientific validation (Lyotard, 1990; Latour, 1993; and for a thought provoking challenge of these rules, see also Feyerabend, 1996). In line with this stream of thought, management knowledge can be viewed as including normative aspects along with fashions, myths and rites that can only be traced by reflexive analysis (Mazza, 1998). As accounted for by Gherardi and Nicolini (2000), management knowledge is relational, provisional, rooted in a context of interaction and situated in the system of ongoing practices. It is therefore local, embedded in artifacts and composed of emotional, tacit, and explicit aspects (Law, 2000). In Table 1 we draw a comparison between the two different views of knowledge.

From this perspective, management knowledge is a form of knowledge-in-practice that cannot be studied outside of the fabric of societal and organizational relations and artifacts because it exists only to the extent that it is enacted in managerial undertakings.

Table 1. Different perspectives on knowledge

	Characteristics	Production/Dissemination rules	Role of practitioners' community
Quasi-scientific management knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract • Context-neutral • Stable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequential process of production, diffusion, institutionalization • Interplay of institutional actors at each stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive acquisition of educational products and fashionable practices
Management knowledge in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational • Locally-based • Provisional • Embedded in artifacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing construction within the network of involved actors and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active translators of practices into the local context

As Czarniawska and Joerges (1989) outline and Alvarez (1997) remarks, management knowledge can be also seen as an ideological system that confers status and fosters cultural hegemony. So, as Barley, Meyer and Gash (1988) have noted, no pre-determined direction of knowledge flows can be established. For instance, consulting firms mainly produce and diffuse theory-in-use (e.g. recipes, heuristics and rules of thumb) by rationalizing existing practices (Berglung and Werr, 2000). Practitioners influence the academic research agenda by shaping priorities and by introducing practices and techniques that will be theorized upon later by the academic community. The mass media also produce and diffuse management knowledge by popularizing academic ideas and reporting on

management life in dramatized terms, with the emphasis on successes and failures (Mazza and Alvarez, 2000). In any case, practical relevance is the main clue rather than scientific rules of validation.

Inside the Black Box II: Management Action

Distinguished philosophers and sociologists have often dealt with the concept of action as an obscure and complex subject. Action seems to be called upon to explain what is ambiguous, unclear or difficult to address. This may explain why, although considered the cornerstone of many organizational issues (organizational learning, organizational change, identity-building, among others), there are not many studies of managerial action to be found in management literature. Recently, a renewed awareness of its centrality has arisen. Many scholars have made serious attempts to theorize managerial action, building on several traditions.

The first pieces on managerial action were written by authors such as March and colleagues, working primarily on non-bureaucratic organisations. The loosely structured organisations that concerned these authors were probably more similar to today's new organizational forms [NOFs] than to the tightly bounded ones that were dominant then. Representative work from this period includes March and Cohen's *Leadership and Ambiguity* (1974), in which they provide recommendations to top executives in educational institutions. Padgett (1980) extended March and Cohen's work on "organised anarchies" to more hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations than the loosely structured institutions originally examined by these two authors. Padgett concluded that March and Cohen's recommendations for the management of organized anarchies, summarized by the expression "unobtrusive management," also apply to more rigid settings, such as bureaucracies.

A more recent formulation is Eccles and Nohria's (1992). Inspired by Wrapp's classic (1984) piece aimed at practitioners, they react against the overflow of business fads and fashions into management education in the 80s and 90s, which has obscured the essentials of management and pushed executives into a frantic search for the latest know-how. Eccles and Nohria identify the essence of management not with technical procedures that have the potential to be standardized or translated into formulas, but in some pragmatic and highly tactical competencies that are effective in "getting things done," in accomplishing goals in social settings. Eccles and Nohria capture the pragmatic essence of the managerial task in the notion of "robust action." This means arranging the mix of organizational elements, from systems and formal structures to shared values and styles, in such a way that, in every short-term choice, power is buttressed and accumulated, and maneuvering capacity enlarged for still-to-be-specified use in the long run.

An illustration of robust action in practice is Padgett and Ansell's (1993) ingenious article on Cosimo de Medici's political skills in 16th century Florence. Padgett and Ansell argue that Cosimo displayed a robust style, including high multivocality, which favored that his actions, vis-à-vis a plurality of parties, could be interpreted coherently from multiple perspectives simultaneously. He acted in the awareness that his actions were moves in simultaneous games. This, added to the fact that his public and private motivations could not be detected, gave him the flexible opportunism needed for maintaining discretionary options across unpredictable futures in spite of attempts by others to reduce his options.

The interesting point about Padgett and Ansell's hermeneutics of Cosimo's style is its fit with the contingencies of his time. Florence's social structures looked very much like a highly differentiated network, with the ties that made up its social organization segregated into economic ties, ties of friendship and social ties, with an abundance of isolated parties or clusters (stakeholders) aspiring to be admitted into the city's core clique. The current softness and fragmentation of organizations favors robust action, which thrives in what Leifer (1988) calls "local games". Understanding organizational actions as local events is in timely accordance with generalized processes of organizational decentralization into highly autonomous structures, or with trends towards the commodification of organizations (the division of corporations into smaller, highly-focused business units that are easily exchangeable in the market with other corporations). Moreover, localization adds to the characterization of managerial action as being of a highly political nature. As the saying goes: "all politics is local."

One of the more recent attempts at developing a theory of action is Fligstein (1997). He criticizes the neo-institutional school of organizational theory for its lack of political dimensions and lack of any notions of social action that recognize enough autonomy in organizational actors. Fligstein proposes that a theory of action should conceptualize organizational actors as "specialists" in obtaining desired social outcomes by working through others, as skilled agents in eliciting co-operation from other parties. Their paramount competency is "empathy," that is, the ability to relate to the constituencies playing in particular local situations, and to develop those constituencies' identity (both their interests and their world views) in ways coherent with the strategy of the actors taking action. This cannot be done without strategies of discourse. These actors must have a repertoire of tactics available for the implementation of their strategies. Management knowledge provides the platform on which to base these tactics.

In Table 2 we collect the lists of criteria for action suggested by the authors mentioned above. The many similarities among these lists suggest that scholars are zeroing in on a bundle of behaviors that embody the fundamentals of managerial action. Many of the principles of management action suggested by these scholars reveal the following paradox: as White (1992) argued, even though management action is located within organizational contexts, organizations themselves are the opposite of action generation. Organizations arise out of control efforts that produce structure, social order, stability, routines and responsibilities. Action is a reverse social phenomenon of organizations, an attempt at change. In other words, organizations or structures serve to block fresh action, or agency.

Agents, in their efforts to act and break through existing rigidities of stable organizational junctions in the search for better adjustments, create new connections and structures of control. These are objectified in organizational rules and praxis, ultimately becoming artifacts (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996) embodying actions, actors' goals and knowledge. In other words, management actions embed knowledge into organizational practices, artifacts, rules, procedures, objects and so on. The idea that management knowledge and action are cemented together in objectified organizational practices emphasizes the embeddedness of management praxis within the social/relational context (Granovetter 1985). So, the link between management knowledge and action has to be located at the level of local dynamics, which is characterized by weakly tied actors and unstable networks of actions (for an empirical account of management knowledge and action within local contexts see Czarniawska, 2000, and Czarniawska, Pipan and Mazza, forthcoming). If the link among management knowledge and action is configured according to specific time-space locations, it can also be implied that this link changes as knowledge changes.

Table 2. Action in organization: different perspectives

	Rules and Guidelines		Guidelines		Rules and Guidelines		Guidelines	
March and Cohen (1974) Advice for management action	Spend time and energy	Persistence	Exchange status for substance	Facilitate the opposition's participation in the change effort	Overload the system with initiatives to overturn inertia	Decouple problems from solutions	Manage "un-obtrusively" (influence the organization imperceptibly)	
Padgett (1980) Rules for management action	Hire rigid analysts for old projects and uncertain analysts for new ones	Isolate high saliency programs from low saliency ones	Hire more liberal managers to run low saliency programs	Share decision making	Manipulate rules of discretion	Do not fight sub-unit biases and internal conflicts but use them in the change process		
Wrapp (1984) Advice for management action	Develop a network of information sources	Concentrate time and energies on priorities	Play the power game	Cultivate a sense of timing	Press cautiously	Appear imprecise, maintain viability and avoid policy straitjackets	Muddle with a purpose	Exploit change
Eccles and Nohria (1992) Principles of robust action	Act without certitude	Constantly preserve flexibility	Be politically savvy	Have a keen sense of timing	Judge the situation at hand	Use rhetoric effectively	Work multiple agendas	
Fligstein (1997) Action tactics	Formal power Use deterrents as a source of power	Ability to set other actors' agenda Inducing others to act by making them think they are in charge	Understanding and using ambiguities Maintaining ambiguity in order to impede others from developing strategies	Framing action by linking broader interpretations of reality to groups' interests Building alliances and coalitions by aggregating interests	Wheeling and annealing Initiating several courses of action	Brokering and networking by bridging "structural holes" Bringing outsiders into coalition to gain network centrality and isolate competitors	Asking for more and accepting less Displaying goallessness and selflessness	Displaying more power than one really has (the appearance of power is power)

As mentioned above, management knowledge is not stable. It is translated and transformed as it travels through –and is “consumed” and enacted in– different contexts (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). So management action does not mechanically lock-step the diffusion of management knowledge; rather, action and knowledge translation occur simultaneously. In sum, we argue that what is needed to bridge management knowledge and action is a framework for studying management knowledge in action. In fact, management knowledge and action cannot be represented by the positivist sequential order, “first knowledge, then action”. In the following pages we make an attempt to operationally disentangle the knowledge-action link as mediated by consumable media and in accordance with the assumptions stated above.

Knowledge Harnessed to Agency

Theoretical arguments on how to disentangle knowledge and action can be derived from different approaches. We primarily rely on the Sociology of Translation approach (Callon, 1998) and on the legacy of the “social psychology of organizing” (Weick, 1969). Both approaches share a similar concept of knowledge and action; moreover, they share the view that knowledge and action are both highly contextualized and rooted in the fabric of interaction and objects, or artifacts at the local (organizational) level. At the same time, both approaches recognize the need to start from concrete organizational elements –such as physical objects (Latour, 1987)– in which action and knowledge are embedded in order to start disentangling them.

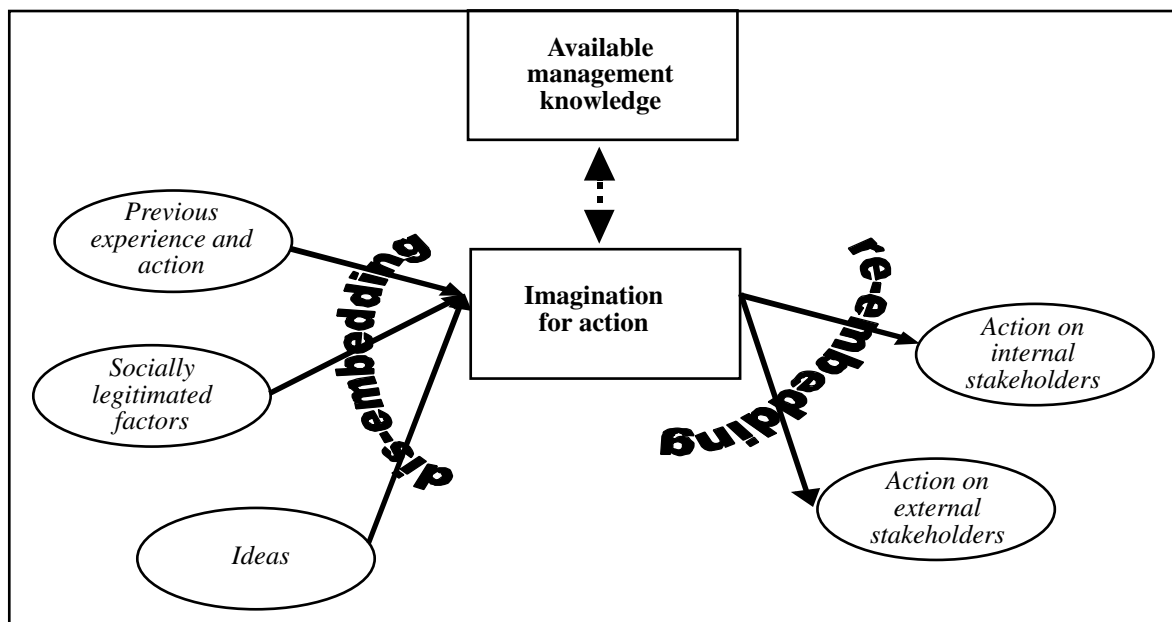
Our point of departure is the concrete organizational artifacts (procedures, rules, systems, objects) that embed management knowledge and actions. As we stated above, the artifacts are embedded along with the network of actors involved in their creation and emergence. In order to make management knowledge transferable to other contexts, it must be dis-embedded (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996) from the fabric of relations and action in which it is embedded. Dis-embedding knowledge from its context means de-contextualizing it and translating it into a portable, codifiable, symbolic form. The symbolic form may be written texts or other symbolic media such as television or the Internet. Managers need a continuous flow of ideas to set up their courses of action in the organizational setting. Moreover, the transformation of local knowledge into ideas is an opportunity for managers’ self-formation (Townley, 1995). In this sense, managers are not interested in consuming knowledge in order to improve their effectiveness and performance but in order to shape (if that is the case) their identities. As Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) maintain, the constant flow of differing organizational ideas also derives from the strength of the “industry” producing them; the mass media play a primary role here. The end result of the dis-embedding process is the codified, decoupled forms of knowledge, the clusters of ideas⁽¹⁾ that describe the environment, organizational dynamics and possibilities.

What is interesting to notice is that once knowledge is translated into ideas, managers have to use their imagination to use these ideas to mobilize people and undertake fresh actions. We concur with White (1992) that the core of the managerial task is the ability to create space for fresh action by breaking strong ties and reconfiguring existing networks of

(1) The word “ideas” is here used in order to generalize the process as much as possible. In the current literature, the terms “images” (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000) and “imagination” (Alvarez and Merchan, 1992) have been used with a similar meaning but referring to more specific organizational dynamics.

actors. In order to perform this role, managers need to be able to re-embed knowledge into new contextualized actions. So, re-embedding knowledge by acting on existing artifacts or networks of relations stays at the heart of managing. However, re-embedding management knowledge into artifacts in complex organizational contexts is not a “one-man show”. Re-embedding implies the ongoing development of ties with other actors, the mobilization of external constituencies, the configuration of new networks of actors, and so on. Completing the local consumption-use of knowledge translates into relying upon, or shaping, a network of internal and external stakeholders, thereby affirming the legitimacy of certain courses of action undertaken (Basu, Dirsmith and Gupta 1999). This introduces a political dimension into the managerial task. In Figure 2 we provide a simple representation of the process.

Figure 2. The Praxis Model of Management Knowledge Dissemination



The process we have described is not linear. There is no sequence or conscious planning for this activity. Often, re-embedding may lead to controversial or “hypocritical” moves, at least in the short run (Brunsson 1989). Hence, translating management knowledge into managerial action can be characterised much more realistically as a process of “muddling through” than as rational decision making. Muddling through emphasizes the political dimension of re-embedding. To muddle through is to build consensus and mobilize constituencies with respect to priorities and specific courses of action in order to get things done, to solve salient and identified problems. It is worth noting that these political dimensions are reminiscent of the distinction drawn by Robert Michels’ –in his classic (1959) piece on political parties– between “organisational leaders” and “politicians”.

Propositions Regarding Knowledge Harnessed to Agency

Based upon the process depicted above, we are now in a position to formulate some research propositions concerning the knowledge-action link in the management field. The December conference supported by CEMP allowed for exploratory research into media

influences on the institutionalization of knowledge and media influences on knowledge-action links [see Report Sections 2,3,4]. The papers listed in section 4 are grouped according to the above two themes. However, there is often overlap between papers looking at the institutionalization of knowledge and papers looking at knowledge-action links, so the divisions here are not meant to be rigid. Often, the link to action is implicit in the discussion of the legitimizing impact of media involvement. Of course, explicating these assumptions is exactly what this report is about.

Knowledge enmeshed in concrete actions and artifacts is dis-embedded so that it can be translated into different contexts. In line with these arguments, we expect that what is already embedded in practice will strongly affect the content of management knowledge. For instance, we expect that most of the consumable management knowledge produced by management education institutions, consulting firms and business media will derive its justification from existing practices and experience. This prior importance is most apparent in the so-called “guru” books or in the “in-between” management journals (*Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review*). Almost invariably, these voices of academic or expert authority seek to legitimate themselves by reference to existing companies and their best practices. Accordingly, in line with Barley, Meyer and Gash’s (1988) arguments on the prevalence of the management issues raised by the practitioner community, we propose the following:

Proposition 1

Management knowledge begins its life cycle in the practitioner’s world and is then re-processed and institutionalized by academic institutions, consulting firms, and mass media.

The reversal of the assumed direction of flows in the production-diffusion model is a common theme in the conference papers. Indeed, this proposition is fundamental to the following propositions: without the dynamic vision of knowledge flows it affords, the subsequent propositions evaporate. The clearest, though perhaps somewhat rare, example of knowledge starting its cultural life cycle among practitioners is to be found in Bäckström’s account of Volvo management practices from the 1970s onward. Top managers at Volvo either published their own books, invited top scholars to work with the company and publish (Maccoby of Harvard), or directly sponsored university or government research. Another practitioner example arises in Gross’s discussion of consultancy publications. Consultancies, often perceived as a link between academics and practitioners, publish externally and internally but not to diffuse per se. Gross remarks: “The difference corresponds to the aim of consultancy knowledge itself: it is not oriented towards a scientific community or the interests of a single scientist, but towards the client and the perception of potential clients” (3).

More widespread than consultancy publications, though often connected to a consultancy, are the management guru books. Clark and Greatbatch, through a series of in-depth interviews, reveal how a wide array of what are normally considered producers and diffusers collaborate in the critical “back stage” production of what is misleadingly sold as a single author text. They write that gurus “collaborate with a range of professional groups during the course, developing, disseminating and revising their ideas. These groups include book editors and publishers, ghost writers, literary agents, fellow consultants and academics, managers (in their capacity as clients or research subjects), conference organizers and public speaking coaches” (1). The impact of practice on these books is also clear, as successful experience is a key evaluating criterion for editors and the ghost writers who often actually craft the text (12).

Finally, in examining the media's impact on the spread and adoption of business process re-engineering [BPR], Graham *et al.* come to question "the feasibility of a genuinely radical mass-market management text because of the need to draw on widely used concepts and the need to use existing management practices to legitimize the lessons [of a text]" (20). In the imbalance of the popular and academic press's attention to BPR, they provide a clue for the relevant bias of a top-down, rational diffusion model. Writing about the imbalance, they identify the process of "management discourse restlessly moving on to the next new idea but the academic discourse requiring to contextualize its content in relation to a canon of works and concepts believed to be significant. This need introduces a systematic bias into academic discourse, over-emphasizing the impact of the perceived canon of foundational texts on organizational practice" (20-21).

Private Decoupling

Once management knowledge is dis-embedded from its original context, it can be consumed by decision makers; in other words, managers may act as knowledge consumers driven by personal (e.g. self-education, power and influence) and organizational (e.g. career paths, strategic goal accomplishments) purposes. The consumption of management knowledge helps managers deal with both personal reputation and organizational performance. As Staw and Epstein (2000) maintain, the reputation effects of adopting fashionable management knowledge are present even if there is no increase in organizational performance. This leads us to wonder whether this decoupling also exists for the drivers of management knowledge consumption. Managers may consume different types of management knowledge (or management knowledge from different sources) when their goal is to boost their reputation than when their goal is to achieve better performance. So, as knowledge consumers, managers can distinguish among "management knowledge for prestige" and "management knowledge for performance". From this, Proposition 2 follows.

Proposition 2

Managers decouple the consumption of management knowledge for personal prestige from the consumption of management knowledge for practical usefulness.

In the CEMP conference papers, we find support for this idea both at the level of media influences and at the level of managerial action. In their content analysis of a cross-national bank merger, Tienari, Vaara and Risberg argue that two discourse types are used in the business press: "rationalistic" and "nationalistic." Rationalistic discourses signal useful knowledge while nationalistic discourses signal prestige knowledge. They argue that the two act as counterbalances in the translation of "merger" as a concept into the organizational and social reality of the new bank, Merita-Nordbanken. They point out that the two discourses are often blended in media coverage, but are analytically distinct. If analytically distinct, then in practice the two discourses are available for managers to use by decoupling one from the other. Kjaer and Langer's historical study of the Danish press found that from 1978 to 1998 interviews and background pieces in business pages increased at the expense of factual news or company precis. The increases in the more subjective genres points to a diversification of media offerings away from purely informational items.

More concrete is the discovery by Gross of the variability of outlets of consultancy publications. For example, some consultancies, such as McKinsey and Co. or Cap Gemini, publish primarily in "prestige" outlets such as peer-reviewed journals or books, while others,

such as Arthur Little or PriceWaterhouse Coopers, publish primarily internal studies and reports and, increasingly, Web-based documents. Due to the mushrooming use of the Internet to publish information, Gross suggests a third category of knowledge: instant knowledge without references and without a hard copy to be stored in a library. Without official publication or references, it is easy to imagine that such publications have little to do with prestige uses. And yet, in organizations with fast-paced change or a “new economy” ambience, instant knowledge may be considered legitimate. Whatever the case, a key question remains: when these documents disappear from the Web, do they cease to exist? Whether this feature has more to do with prestige or rationalized consumption is still not clear, but the continuing impact of the Web means that the timeless quality of such management knowledge will be an important issue. These media influences point to the existence of varying types of knowledge. Evidence of decoupling in practice is more scant, but some emerged from the conference nonetheless.

In her discussion of the translation of managerial control [MC] into practice in Italian agencies, Pipan describes how both technical and social aspects came into play. Most importantly, the ambiguity and the relevance of MC as a concept meant that various practices, some old and some novel, could be linked to MC. In other words, MC as ideology and MC as technique had been decoupled. MC was being used by various local actors or coalitions, such as accountants or information technology specialists, to pursue boundedly rational interests. Pipan describes how the ambiguity surrounding various interpretations of what MC is have given MC an almost ‘metaphysical’ aura. Once the need for MC was normatively established, a host of practical manifestations were produced. The practical version of MC was a process of “signification”. This process “was stabilized and aided by production of artifacts: an organization chart, a typology of products and services, and indicators of productivity, efficiency and quality” (8). The story of Volvo’s changing practices also includes elements of managerial decoupling. For example, Volvo adopted the trappings of the main ideas from popular management literature in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. However, these changes in knowledge take-up occurred against the background of what the author describes as the pursuit of essentially the same organizational techniques throughout the period: a focus on teamwork within a generally flat hierarchy. The stability of practices compared to the changeability of the problems and solutions identified by top management reflects the primarily prestige value of consumption of various types of management knowledge (Bäckström).

Mazza and Strandgaard-Pedersen take a different approach to the question of status-driven versus pragmatically inspired consumption. By surveying managers directly, they produce several insights. As regards the choice of which management texts to read, the most important influences on managers’ choices were references to particular works in workshops or classrooms and personal recommendations from colleagues. The two highest scoring reasons for reading texts were to gain relevant knowledge and to gain academic knowledge. Taken together, these findings support the importance of prestige dynamics in consumption. Finally, the researchers also found that different sources of knowledge are clearly evaluated according to criteria of prestige or relevance. Academic sources such as books and courses are sought for gaining generalized, theoretical knowledge, while mass media outlets are used for basic business information as opposed to more theoretical or academic knowledge.

Public Coupling

Once management knowledge has become consumable, either for prestige or to improve performance, managers may re-embed it in their organizations. In order to re-embed

it in artifacts, managers need to mobilize actors and configure networks of actors. So managers have to translate the increasing flows of management knowledge into increasing flows of actions; similarly, flows of actions need to be turned into physical objects and visible accomplishments. While proposition two is more focused on the private or internal decoupling of knowledge, proposition three draws our attention to the coupling involved in visible, directed action. Propositions two and three dovetail nicely: knowledge that can be decoupled in a consumption stage can more readily be harnessed to particular action sequences in highly variable local contingencies. This supports the view that a good manager is one who is able to mobilize action and actors to get things done (for a recent reformulation of this old rule of thumb, see Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000). By applying Cohen, March and Olsen's (1972) seminal garbage can intuition, we see that the flow of knowledge and the flow of action have no a priori synchronicity; that is, knowledge does not precede action chronologically as the more rational actor models assume. We follow March and Olsen's (1989) argument that the flows are coupled under the appropriateness rule. Each manager constructs her own appropriateness rule to develop tactics for her network of actors and accomplish her goals. The point being that the appropriateness rule works simultaneously on filtering knowledge and evaluating courses of action.

Proposition 3

Managers couple flows of action and flows of knowledge to reinforce their position within their networks of actors.

Turning to the CEMP conference papers, we return to Pipan's discussion of the practical translation of managerial control [MC]. In terms of coupling, her entire project fits with this idea, as it is about the formation of actor-networks as the process of concretizing abstract concepts. One example drawn from her work is the use of consulting companies to initiate implementation. She writes that the consulting companies "conducted a study of administrative practices and on the basis of their results constructed the first model of MC, called 'uniform control', to be used in various offices" (8). As we discussed above, Bäckström's study of Volvo shows how ideas culled from popular management publications were adopted by Volvo's managers in name if not essence. At the same time, through ties with researchers, involvement in government research, or self-initiated studies, Volvo's managers engaged in network formation to strengthen their own position. Gyllenhammer, when CEO of Volvo in the early 1980s, held leadership positions in the following research institutions: the Council for Leadership and Management (Swedish Employers Federation), the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, and the Public Agenda Foundation. Also, Gyllenhammer started a Volvo advisory board which brought prominent international figures into direct contact with the company. These positions involved Volvo in a variety of research programs consonant with its own practices. Such was Gyllenhammer's network centrality that his 50th birthday was marked with the publication of a book with chapters written by various renowned academics and executives, many with direct ties to the company or the research institutes that benefited from access to Volvo for their projects (14-15). Within Volvo, Bäckström's description of the "Dialog" program also serves to illustrate coupling in managerial action. Using Piaget (definitely a prestige name) as a model for "action learning," an entire training program was developed which sought to strengthen the "Volvo spirit". Beyond the formulation of purpose, the Dialog program's implementation involved employees in a series of workshops in which they read about the history and culture of Volvo while also redesigning work processes. Here we see the coupling described in proposition 3: as new factories were being designed, knowledge was being produced throughout Volvo's sub-units.

The Rise of Sense-Making

Practices to couple flows of knowledge and flows of actions vary. Normative practices –for instance, vision, organizational culture, new organizational forms– are designed to face highly uncertain and politicized contexts (Barley and Kunda, 1992). Rational practices –for instance, strategic planning and business process reengineering– are adopted when managers seek to optimize business outputs or have to display control over outcomes (Salancik and Meindl, 1984). As it involves unstable knowledge and networks of actors, any single process of disembedding-reembedding is unique and needs ad hoc mobilization and network configuration. As a consequence, we can expect managers to rely upon normative practices rather than rational and universalistic optimizing practices to translate knowledge into action. Managers need to “make sense,” to initiate collective action, a process for which normative and cognitive knowledge is better suited.

Proposition 4

The managerial task requires the increasing adoption of normative practices, as opposed to rational practices, for translating knowledge

Media influences on management knowledge contribute to the use of normative practices. For example, among the Barcelona conference papers we find Jackson’s close reading of the dramatization of e-commerce in New Zealand. One important consideration is that e-commerce, surprisingly, is not technically defined, but is rather a business strategy employing information technologies. Already, the possibilities for normative practices is greater in a strategy than in a technological change. Jackson summarizes the media’s influence on producing normatively oriented knowledge thus: “Through the skillful articulation of setting, character, and action themes, the media can reduce a fairly complex technical idea into a rhetorical vision that most people can gain a broad appreciation of and take a basic stake in” (12).

All of us have seen (or are guilty of) the use of comic strips in management-oriented presentations. Going a step further, Jarlov and Larsen examine the incidence and content of Donald Duck comics between 1950 and 2000. Their basic framework illustrates proposition 4 since comics, like children’s literature, by combining iconographic pictures and compact text, are “vehicles for the transmission of cultural norms and values” (7). One suggestive finding is the lengthening of the stories from 1950 to 2000. In 1950, most stories were a few panels. By 2000, most are more than a page. Two possibilities emerge: the target audience is older (longer attention spans) and the comics’ content has more involved and subtle messages (versus the ‘quick joke’ of the 1950s period). Hence, they are more like parables, a form more conducive to the diffusion of normative ideas. Naturally, these changes would be more convincing with some verification of the link between comics and managers. In their longitudinal study of the Danish business press, Kjaer and Langer document how the reporting on conflicts has shifted from locating them in blanket ideological terms to more particular and personal contexts. They write: “Increasingly, journalists attempt to decide where to place responsibility or blame – both among politicians, companies, and management CEOs. Ideological differences do not play an important role any longer and are replaced by debates about personal integrity” (20). This shift is consistent with proposition 4 because the focus on personal integrity highlights the normative aspects of managerial decisions.

Accelerating Consumption

Finally, the arguments above converge to give a picture of the managerial task as increasingly political and less technical. Whilst the technical, knowledge-driven managerial action prevalent up to the 80s has been suffering from increasing environmental uncertainty and ambiguity, the politically-driven management action we are hypothesizing is opportunistic with respect to environmental uncertainty and ambiguity. In fact, ambiguity and uncertainty give scope for fresh action (White, 1992), provided that management knowledge is constantly at hand for creating new ideas. Nowadays, managers are increasingly called upon to manage the process of fine-tuning the organizational identity to social expectations. This action implicates the manager's sensemaking abilities. To develop this sensemaking capacity, according to our arguments, managers rely on different sources: scientific management knowledge at hand, knowledge dis-embedded from previous actions and perspectives, and management knowledge legitimated by fashions. Therefore, we can expect to see a growth in the volume and diffusion of management knowledge because the defining characteristic of the managerial endeavor consists of reacting rapidly to market challenges, being flexible, and initiating broad organizational change.

Proposition 5

In order to manage the need for ongoing organizational change, more consumable management knowledge, in terms of volume and degree of differentiation, is required from educational institutions, consulting firms and the mass media

In the CEMP conference, there were numerous examples of proposition 5. Byrkjeflot's documents the emergence of alliances among media companies, educational organizations and consultancies, such as Universitas 21 or Quisic, to provide e-learning of management knowledge, suggests an increasing demand and scope of management knowledge. Clark and Greatbatch describe how the need for new guru books is so great that consultants even receive cold calls from publishers based on a presentation or journal article; alternatively, to meet the need for publications, editors will employ ghost writers to make sure a new product is in the knowledge pipeline. Further evidence of increasing knowledge production is found in Gross's study of consultancy publications, which reveals that nine of the fourteen consultancies did not start publishing until the 1990s, and only two –McKinsey and BCG– started publishing earlier than the 1980s. Further empirical clues as to the validity of this proposition come from Kjaer and Langer's study of the Danish business press. They find that the proportion of newspaper articles covering business themes grew from 16% in 1958 to 33% in 1998. In terms of differentiation, they find an increase in articles incorporating various themes in 1998. This suggests that more developed expectations for coverage of varying angles have developed. Also, on the differentiation side, they conclude that not only has business news gained in prominence, but "it also has come to build on 'modern' journalistic genres and news values that entail both a differentiation of business news in term of topics, in terms of subjects, and in terms of the types of events that motivate news..." (21).

Implications and Conclusions: Back to Local Politics?

Our propositions have several implications regarding existing approaches and future research areas. They are mainly concerned with a problem of models of knowledge diffusion

rooted in neo-institutional theory. The problem, inherent in the connotations of the word “diffusion” itself, is that knowledge is assumed to flow “down” –or diffuse– from centers of knowledge production, namely consultants and academia, through various media, into the minds of passive managers. Other proposed approaches such as scientism, problem orientation (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994) and intermediate models of knowledge production (Huff, 2000) ultimately share this same view. We seek to reintroduce managers with increasingly political tasks into neo-institutional theory without losing the sociological framework neo-institutionalism has brought to organizational analysis. To link knowledge and action without elements of institutional analysis –in other words, to argue that manager’s choices flow “up” to knowledge producers, who then adjust their output– would err on the side of an under-socialized model of behavior.

Our propositions on the link between management knowledge and action also point out the primarily political nature of the managerial task. The implications of this assumption are manifold. First, the managerial task is conceived of as unobtrusive – what White calls managing by indirection. Second, managing context is more appropriate in uncertain and changing environments than managing content. Third, managing organizing (the process) is a more realistic expression of the managerial endeavor than managing organizations. Fourth, setting up structures, selecting staff and then giving autonomy is more politically effective than managing operational details. Finally, organizations are a socially constructed reality and, therefore, managing sense-making (and there is no sense-making without discourse and rhetoric) is at least as relevant as control systems. Each of these issues deserves careful academic scrutiny and has notable consequences for practice. We suggest the three following implications derived from the arguments above.

First, the view of managerial action as highly political leads to a notion of managers as experts in long-term strategic action through playing short-term local games. This political model of managers was pointed out some time ago. March (1988) argues that executives should be seen as political brokers who relentlessly, from the power base of coalitions they need to build and continuously maintain, negotiate the composition of the firm and bargain its goals. However, while political theories of organizations have existed for a long time in organizational theory (among others, Cyert and March, 1963; Hickson *et al.*, 1971; Pettigrew, 1973), they have never become hegemonic, nor have managers’ tasks been widely recognized as essentially political, with the exception of a few practitioner-oriented works (Kotter, 1985; Pfeffer, 1992).

Second, linking knowledge to action and action to physical artifacts enables us to address the spread of fads and buzzwords in management literature from a political perspective. For instance, managers’ ability to translate ideas into action and actors’ mobilization lies at the core of most recent theorizing on strategic intent and architecture (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). What is very important here is that this political, pragmatic notion of executives’ work seems to fit contemporary corporate realities particularly well. For one thing, the rebellion of shareholders and other stakeholders against managerial prerogatives is pushing executives to be more responsive to a variety of external constituencies, thus adding a further challenge to the need to balance internal groups. Corporate missions are often employed as umbrellas for these two kinds of responsiveness (Mazza, 1999). Another factor that has increased the relevance of a political notion of managerial tasks is what we could call the informalization of organizing, meaning a lesser emphasis on strong structures and the formal systems of organizations.

Also amplifying the political content of managerial work is the commodification of organizations. It is impossible to coordinate units that are only loosely subject to hierarchical

umbrellas with a strict command-and-control style. All these factors are pushing managers to become more like mobilizers of collective action, leaders of social movements created around specific and transitory issues, or like coordinators of a number of small or middle size cells, or transitory teams enacted around projects. Years ago, Zald and Berger (1978) noted emerging analogies between the organizational tendencies of economic organizations and social and political movements. The analogy is much closer today.

Third, this summary of the consequences for managers, and for their development, of the organizational milieu, and the repertoire of tactics just described, is less than novel. The gist of our arguments was already present in what are perhaps two of the most lucid and enduringly valid reflections on the challenges facing managers in their efforts to promote collective action through their decision-making and their acting (Roethlisberger, 1954; and, following him, Athos and Coffey, 1975). Roethlisberger (1954) states that managers should try to apply several sets of knowledge to concrete situations. Among these different sets of knowledge are the following: knowledge that states what the appropriate behavior of persons in groups should be (the so-called norms of behavior); second, knowledge of behavior (regardless of time, place, and circumstance); third, the knowledge which persons have about themselves and to which they have to be true and consistent; fourth, the knowledge that states the logical conditions that must be met if the purposes of an organization are to be sufficiently fulfilled; finally, the knowledge that states what the behavior of a person should be if verifiable knowledge about things and people is to be acquired (scientific knowledge). Athos and Coffey (1975) call these dimensions social, knowledge, psychological, purpose, and learning, respectively.

The authors affirm that these five dimensions have to be balanced continuously in managers' daily work. Moreover, this balancing is a very personal challenge. As Roethlisberger recognizes, managers develop by simultaneously balancing these dimensions and the growing awareness of the complexity of relationships in concrete phenomena. To privilege any one of the dimensions is to create an imbalance that sooner or later will be rejected by reality. Roethlisberger calls the emphasis on one dimension at the expense of the others cultism, which he sees happening most often in science. Most probably, this cultism lies at the root of some of the fads we see in the realm of management knowledge.

In this report, we suggest that knowledge is needed to inspire managers' courses of action. These actions often converge for the purpose of re-embedding knowledge in artifacts which frame the "physical landscape" of organizations. Like modern Pharaohs building pyramids and in need of a totemic symbol of their power, managers need to have physical accomplishments to ground their legitimacy. In many cases, new buildings, new office layouts and new representations of organizational structures –that is to say, new organizational charts– accomplish this goal. In many cases, re-embedding into artifacts is achieved by adopting new technologies (nowadays web sites or e-business, just a year or two ago large plants, robots and unmanned factories) or state-of-the-art information systems. In all these cases, managers translate ideas into robust actions, and actions into artifacts of all types.

The political nature of the managerial task, as we have been describing it, also explains why managers are active in seeking a constant flow of management knowledge. To assume a constant flow of knowledge and an active role of managers in consuming knowledge implies acknowledging that the traditional role of educational institutions and consulting firms is at stake. Ongoing knowledge flows cannot be in fact provided by "one shot" technical knowledge carriers like educational institutions and consulting firms. More powerful carriers are needed: mass media are playing an increasingly important role in this

direction (Mazza and Alvarez, 2000). The role of written media in the diffusion of business knowledge, managers' reading habits, the input that the specific and idiosyncratic act of reading provides to decision-making processes: these are issues whose importance is increasing in these media rich times.

Future research will no doubt improve our exploratory effort in describing the link between knowledge and action by advancing a research endeavor in which some of the authors of this report have been engaged for years: understanding the creation and consumption of managerial knowledge. Most of this research has been approached from a macro perspective, usually within the basic framework of the neo-institutional school. The effort has been very fruitful in mapping the main institutions involved in the transmission of business knowledge; useful in tracing the dynamics of transfer across business systems. It has inspired fine historical research. Yet, the neo-institutional approach lacks the micro perspective necessary to understand what we consider to be the most important driving force behind the diffusion of business knowledge: consumption. Consumption is the critical link between management knowledge and action, knowledge and practice. Most current approaches conceive of managers as passive and rather powerless consumers of knowledge, without much influence either on the content or on the process of management knowledge transmission. Unfortunately, this view has been reinforced by an often cynical skepticism about the influence of business schools, consultants, and best-sellers.

We opened this report by asking ourselves whether, following Bloom, managers are like readers of fiction in that they read to enlarge their sense of otherness, heal the pains of solitude, and practice a sense of irony. Although we cannot draw any final conclusions, we tend to agree that managers are not so far removed from Bloom's fiction readers. Managers play mainly political games in their daily work. As for most readers, reading is for managers a primary source of ideas, techniques, inspiration and imagination for action, for moves in their political games. Managers have no alternative sources of consumable knowledge and so the following paradox emerges: managers' skepticism about the content of management publications lies at the very heart of the steady spread of such publications. Managers cannot replace reading with other means of knowledge acquisition. The institutional legitimacy of media-disseminated knowledge offers justification even as the contingencies of managing push managers to seek new knowledge, new inspiration. In other words, managers are compelled to live with their skeptical eagerness in our media-saturated world.

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Exhibit 1

PARADOXES OF MEDIA INFLUENCES ON KNOWLEDGE
CONSUMPTION AND USE

**Call for papers for December 2000 Conference “The Role of the Media in the
Consumption of Management Ideas in Europe”**

December 1 - 2, 2000 (Barcelona, Spain)

The Creation of European Management Practices (CEMP) Research Program promotes work on the interaction between institutional contexts in Europe and management ideas. Specifically, it focuses on the role of the different carriers of management knowledge (such as business schools, consulting firms, multinationals, publishing houses, popular press and others) and their interface with the final consumers of that knowledge.

The role of written media in the diffusion of management knowledge has so far received scattered attention by scholars. While splendid research on academic outlets is already available, popular media, such as the press, weeklies, and books (from bestsellers to textbooks), have not been dealt with extensively. This void reflects the bias towards production in studies on the spread of management knowledge. To counter this, an emphasis on popular media will help to direct scholarly work to the dynamics of the consumption of knowledge by organizational actors. The organizing committee believes this to be the strategic challenge for research in this field in the future.

The objective of this Conference will be to stimulate and exchange research in this direction. Topics in which the organizing committee is especially interested are, among others:

- Roles of written media (e.g., social legitimation, imitation and status) in the consumption of management knowledge.
- Institutional characteristics of publishing houses specialized in management.
- Processes of selection and acceptance of topics, gatekeeping and the role of editors in publishing outlets.
- Institutional characteristics of the popular press (e.g., weeklies and newspapers) specialized in management.
- The impact and dynamics of academic events and networks (e.g. EGOS, American Academy of Management, etc.) in the social construction of management publications and ideas.
- Cross-national circulation of management ideas through written media.
- Empirical studies on the impact of written media on actual managerial practices.
- Emergence and consequences of new media, such as the Internet, video, films, and others.
- Popular images of business in fiction (movies, humor, literature, etc.).
- Connection between reading, imagining, and acting.

The Conference leverages on three different events:

Exhibit 1 (continued)

First, a paper presentation forum. A selection of papers on the above-mentioned topics will be discussed on Friday Dec. 1 and the morning of Saturday Dec. 2. Abstracts of 500-800 words should be sent by e-mail to the Organizing Committee before July 30. Acceptance will be communicated by the end of August. If requested, the Organizing Committee could cover travel and accommodation expenses for authors with accepted papers. In cases of special academic interest, the Organizing Committee will consider funding for the research to be presented at the Conference.

Innovative ways of supporting the presentation of papers (e.g., new technologies) are welcome. The Organizing Committee is already in contact with scholarly publishers to publish a volume with a selection of the presented contributions.

Second, panels with actual consumers and diffusers. Besides the discussion of papers, the Organizing Committee will arrange, on the second day, panels of managers and actors directly involved in the transmission of management ideas. Already contacted are: a) Managers, editors, gatekeepers, etc. of publishing houses; b) Public relations managers of large corporations; c) Journalists in charge of business sections in newspapers; d) Editors-in-chief of weekly management magazines.

This forum will give academics an opportunity to develop research ideas and priorities from social agents in the publishing world and other media, as well as exposure and contacts. This is particularly relevant because these actors have rarely been a subject of study in relation to the spread of management ideas.

Third, a theory-driven workshop. The Organizing Committee will invite a selected group of senior scholars from different disciplines to reflect on managers as consumers of ideas for action, the role of the media, their impact on managerial imagining, and the building of professional identities. This exchange will be held on the last day of the conference with the goal of stimulating creative theory.

The Organizing Committee is composed of José Luis Alvarez (IESE), Lars Engwall (Uppsala University), and Carmelo Mazza and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen (Copenhagen Business School). The Co-ordinator of the Conference is:

Professor José Luis Alvarez
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08034 Barcelona, Spain
Phone 34-93-2534200
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alvarez@iese.edu

Exhibit 2

PARADOXES OF MEDIA INFLUENCES ON KNOWLEDGE
CONSUMPTION AND USE

The Role of Media in the Consumption of Management Ideas

CEMP Conference
1st and 2nd December 2000 at IESE-Barcelona

Organizing Committee

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CEMP Coordinator

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PROGRAMME

Exhibit 2 (continued)

<i>Friday</i>		<i>DECEMBER 1st, 2000</i>
8:45	Bus departing from the hotels to IESE	
IESE <i>Classroom G-101</i>		
9:30 – 10:00	CONFERENCE PRESENTATION Professor Lars Engwall Professor José Luis Alvarez	
Session 1: MEDIA DIFFUSION AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES 1 Chair: Lars Engwall		
10:00 – 10:30	ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND THE POPULAR MANAGERIAL DISCOURSE. A LONGITUDINAL INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AT VOLVO CAR CORPORATION Henrik Backström, <i>Abo Akademi University, Finland</i>	
10:30 – 11:00	PRINT-MEDIA TRACES AND RECEPTION PATTERNS. EXPLORING THE UPTAKE OF MANAGEMENT FASHIONS Jos Benders, <i>Nijmegen Business School, The Netherlands</i> Stefan Heusinkveld, <i>Nijmegen Business School, The Netherlands</i>	
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee – Break	
11:30 – 12:00	COMMUNICATING MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA IN THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT IN ISRAEL Michal Frenkel, <i>Tel Aviv University, Israel</i> Yehouda Shenhav, <i>Tel Aviv University, Israel</i>	
12:00 – 12:30	THE ROLE OF TEXTS IN THE DIFFUSION OF RE-ENGINEERING CONCEPTS IN EUROPE Ian Graham, <i>University of Edinburgh, Scotland</i> Robin Williams, <i>University of Edinburgh, Scotland</i> Ashley Lloyd, <i>University of Edinburgh, Scotland</i> Roger Slack, <i>University of Lancaster, England</i>	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
Session 2: MEDIA DIFFUSION AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES 2 Chair: Carmelo Mazza		
14:30 – 15:00	THE STANDARDIZATION OF EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION. REGULATING THROUGH ACCREDITATIONS, RANKINGS AND GUIDELINES Tina Hedmo, <i>Uppsala University, Sweden</i> Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson, <i>Uppsala University, Sweden</i> Linda Wedlin, <i>Uppsala University, Sweden</i>	
15:00 – 15:30	BRINGING E-BUSINESS TO NEW ZEALAND: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA Brad Jackson, <i>Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand</i>	

Exhibit 2 (continued)

15:30 – 16:00	MEDIATORS OF MEANING: POPULAR MEDIA AND MANAGERIAL LIFESTYLES Beyza Furman, <i>Istambul Bilgi University, Turkey</i> Arzu Iseri, <i>Bogazini University, Turkey</i> Ahmet Suerdem, <i>Istambul Bilgi University, Turkey</i>
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee – Break
16:30 – 17:00	RATIONALISTIC AND NATIONALISTIC TRANSLATIONS. MEDIA TEXTS AS SITES FOR THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF A CROSS-BORDER MERGER. Janne Tienari, <i>Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland</i> Eero Vaara, <i>Helsinki School of Economics, Finland</i> Anette Risberg, <i>Jonkoping International Business School, Sweden</i>
17:00 – 17:30	THE DISSEMINATION OF CONSULTANCY PUBLICATIONS Claudia Gross, <i>University of Reading, United Kingdom</i>
17:30 – 18:00	WRAP-UP OF THE DAY Lars Engwall
18:15 – 20:00	Panel: PUBLISHERS Chair: Behlül Üsdiken, <i>Co-Editor, Organization Studies</i>
	David Musson, <i>Oxford University Press, United Kingdom</i> Rosemary Nixon, <i>Blackwell Publishers, United Kingdom</i> Larisa Tatge, <i>IESE Department of International Communications, Spain</i>
20:00 – 21:30	Dinner at IESE
21:30	Bus departing from IESE to the hotels
Saturday DECEMBER 2nd, 2000	
9:00	Bus departing from the hotels to IESE
IESE Classroom G-201	
9:30 – 9:45	PRESENTATION OF THE DAY Professor Jesper Strandgaard
Session 3: THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON MANAGEMENT PRACTICES Chair: Jesper Strandgaard	
9:45 – 10:15	BUSINESS NEWS AS AN INSTITUTION. AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DANISH BUSINESS PRESS Peter Kjaer, <i>Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</i> Roy Langer, <i>Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</i>
10:15 – 10:45	THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ALLIANCES FOR E-LEARNING Haldor Byrkjeflot, <i>Norwegian Research Center in Management and Organization, Norway</i>

Exhibit 2 (continued)

10:45 – 11:15	<i>Coffee – Break</i>
11:15 – 11:45	THE ROLE OF BOOK EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS IN THE SELECTION AND CREATION OF MANAGEMENT IDEAS Timothy Clark, <i>The Management Centre. King’s College London, United Kingdom</i>
11:45 – 12:15	PROFESSIONAL MEDIA AND MANAGEMENT FASHION: THE CASE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ‘PEOPLE MANAGEMENT’ MAGAZINE Chris Carter, <i>University of Leicester, United Kingdom</i> Frank Mueller, <i>University of Leicester, United Kingdom</i> Harry Scarbrough, <i>University of Leicester, United Kingdom</i> Jacky Swan, <i>Warwick Business School, United Kingdom</i>
12:15 – 13:15	<i>Lunch</i>
Session 4: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE CONSUMPTION Chair: Behlül Üsdiken	
13:30 – 14:00	GOOD READINGS MAKE GOOD ACTION: NOTHING SO PRACTICAL AS A PRESTIGIOUS STORY Carmelo Mazza, <i>Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</i> Jesper Strandgaard, <i>Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</i>
14:00 – 14:30	HOW TO CONSTRUCT AN ACTOR NETWORK: MANAGERIAL CONTROL FROM IDEA TO PRACTICE Tatiana Pipan, <i>Università di Roma “La Sapienza”, Italy</i>
14:30 – 15:00	<i>Coffee – Break</i>
15:00 – 15:30	THE MEDIATIC ROLE OF HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL’S CASES. DECONSTRUCTING THE FORM OF THE CASE HOT LINE, INC. THROUGH THE NOTION OF RELEVANCE Ianna Contardo, <i>Warwick Business School, United Kingdom</i>
15:30 – 16:00	DO THE DONALD DUCK COMIC STRIPS CONTAIN AND TRANSMIT MANAGEMENT IDEAS? Boje Larsen, <i>Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</i> Signe Jarlov, <i>Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</i>
16:15 – 18:15	Research Forum: MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE AND MANAGEMENT ACTION Chair: Jesper Strandgaard
	Nils Brunsson, <i>Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden</i> John Meyer, <i>Stanford University, United States</i>
18:15	CLOSING SESSION Professor José Luis Alvarez
18:45	Bus departing from IESE to the hotels
	Dinner in Barcelona

Exhibit 2 (continued)

Participants

Lars Engwall, *Uppsala University, Sweden*
 José Luis Alvarez, *IESE, Spain*
 Rolv Peter Amdam, *Norwegian School of Management, Norway*
 Mathias Kipping, *University of Reading, United Kingdom*
 Nils Brunsson, *Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden*
 Marie-Laure Djelic, *ESSEC, France*
 John Meyer, *Stanford University, United States*
 David Musson, *Oxford University Press, United Kingdom*
 Rosemary Nixon, *Blackwell Publishers, United Kingdom*
 Larisa Tatge, *IESE Department of International Communications, Spain*
 Behlül Üsdiken, *Sabancı University, Turkey*
 Claudia Gross, *University of Reading, United Kingdom*
 Antti Ainamo, *Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, Finland*
 Jordi Comas, *IESE, Spain*
 Hallgeir Gammelsater, *Molde University College, Norway*
 Silviya Svejnova, *IESE, Spain*
 Henrik Backström, *Abo Akademi University, Finland*
 Jos Benders, *Nijmegen Business School, The Netherlands*
 Stefan Heusinkveld, *Nijmegen Business School, The Netherlands*
 Michal Frenkel, *Tel Aviv University, Israel*
 Ian Graham, *University of Edinburgh, Scotland*
 Linda Wedlin, *Uppsala University, Sweden*
 Brad Jackson, *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*
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 Eero Vaara, *Helsinki School of Economics, Finland*
 Peter Kjaer, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
 Roy Langer, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
 Haldor Byrkjeflot, *Norwegian Research Center in Management and Organization, Norway*
 Timothy Clark, *The Management Centre. King's College London, United Kingdom*
 Chris Carter, *University of Leicester, United Kingdom*
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 Jesper Strandgaard, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
 Tatiana Pipan, *Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Italy*
 Ianna Contardo, *Warwick Business School, United Kingdom*
 Boje Larsen, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
 Signe Jarlov, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*

Exhibit 3

PARADOXES OF MEDIA INFLUENCES ON KNOWLEDGE
CONSUMPTION AND USE**Papers from the CEMP Barcelona Conference**

1. **BRINGING E-BUSINESS TO NEW ZEALAND: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA**
Brad Jackson, *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*
2. **BUSINESS NEWS AS AN INSTITUTION. AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DANISH BUSINESS PRESS**
Peter Kjaer, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
Roy Langer, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
3. **RATIONALISTIC AND NATIONALISTIC TRANSLATIONS. MEDIA TEXTS AS SITES FOR THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF A CROSS-BORDER MERGER.**
Anette Risberg, *Jonkoping International Business School, Sweden*
Janne Tienari, *Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland*
Eero Vaara, *Helsinki School of Economics, Finland*
4. **GOOD READINGS MAKE GOOD ACTION: NOTHING SO PRACTICAL AS A PRESTIGIOUS STORY**
Carmelo Mazza, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
Jesper Strandgaard, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
5. **HOW TO CONSTRUCT AN ACTOR NETWORK: MANAGERIAL CONTROL FROM IDEA TO PRACTICE**
Tatiana Pipan, *Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Italy*
6. **PROFESSIONAL MEDIA AND MANAGEMENT FASHION: THE CASE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND 'PEOPLE MANAGEMENT' MAGAZINE.**
Chris Carter, *University of Leicester, United Kingdom*
Frank Mueller, *University of Leicester, United Kingdom*
Harry Scarbrough, *University of Leicester, United Kingdom*
Jacky Swan, *Warwick Business School, United Kingdom*
7. **MEDIATORS OF MEANING: POPULAR MEDIA AND MANAGERIAL LIFESTYLES**
Beyza Furman, *Istambul Bilgi University, Turkey*
Arzu Iseri, *Bogazini University, Turkey*
Ahmet Suerdem, *Istambul Bilgi University, Turkey*
8. **ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND POPULAR MANAGERIAL DISCOURSE. A LONGITUDINAL INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AT VOLVO CAR CORPORATION.**
Henrik Backström, *Abo Akademi University, Finland*
9. **DO THE DONALD DUCK COMIC STRIPS CONTAIN AND TRANSMIT MANAGEMENT IDEAS?**
Boje Larsen, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*
Signe Jarlov, *Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*

Exhibit 3 (continued)

- 10. PRINT-MEDIA TRACES AND RECEPTION PATTERNS. EXPLORING THE UPTAKE OF MANAGEMENT FASHIONS.**
Jos Benders, *Nijmegen Business School, The Netherlands*
Stefan Heusinkveld, *Nijmegen Business School, The Netherlands*
- 11. COMMUNICATING MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA IN THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT IN ISRAEL.**
Michal Frenkel, *Tel Aviv University, Israel*
Yehouda Shenhav, *Tel Aviv University, Israel*
- 12. THE DISSEMINATION OF CONSULTANCY PUBLICATIONS**
Claudia Gross, *University of Reading, United Kingdom*
- 13. THE MEDIATIC ROLE OF HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL'S CASES. DECONSTRUCTING THE FORM OF THE CASE HOT LINE, INC. THROUGH THE NOTION OF RELEVANCE.**
Ianna Contardo, *Warwick Business School, United Kingdom*
- 14. THE ROLE OF BOOK EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS IN THE SELECTION AND CREATION OF MANAGEMENT IDEAS**
Timothy Clark, *The Management Centre. King's College London*
- 15. THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ALLIANCES FOR E-LEARNING**
Haldor Byrkjeflot, *Norwegian Research Center in Management and Organization, Norway*
- 16. THE ROLE OF TEXTS IN THE DIFFUSION OF RE-ENGINEERING CONCEPTS IN EUROPE**
Ian Graham, *University of Edinburgh, Scotland*
Robin Williams, *University of Edinburgh, Scotland*
Ashley Lloyd, *University of Edinburgh, Scotland*
Roger Slack, *University of Lancaster, England*
- 17. THE STANDARIZATION OF EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION. REGULATING THROUGH ACCREDITATIONS, RANKINGS AND GUIDELINES.**
Tina Hedmo, *Uppsala University, Sweden*
Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson, *Uppsala University, Sweden*
Linda Wedlin, *Uppsala University, Sweden*